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NSA-files repeatedly show collection of data «against countries» - not «from», publisert fredag 22. november



**THE MISSION THAT NEVER SLEEPS:** In this NSA-document the agency describes how it collects data against countries. Screenshot: Power Point-presentation of NSA's GAO-program

## NSA-files repeatedly show collection of data «against countries» - not «from»

**Journalist Glenn Greenwald explains why he means Norwegian Intelligence Service are wrong in their interpretation of the Snowden-files.**

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• [Here's the Norwegian version](#)

In response to our story on Tuesday on NSA collection of Norwegian metadata, the Norwegian military intelligence service claimed that the Boundless Informant slides do not count the number of telephone calls collected by the NSA against Norway. Instead, the agency's chief Lt. Gen. Gen. Kjell Grandhagen claimed, the slides

***«The tool is able to create a near real-time snapshot of GAO's collection capability at any given moment. The tool allows users to select a country on a map and view the metadata volume and select details about the collection against that country.»***

Glenn Greenwald

Over er plansjer fra en topphemmelig presentasjon om Boundless Informant. Siste plansje viser et kart som graderer funn i det aktuelle søket mellom ulike land, sortert fra rødt (mange funn) til mørkegrønt (få funn).

only count calls collected outside of Norway - in Afghanistan - that the Norwegian government provides to the NSA. This same claim has recently been made by the NSA itself in response to similar recent reporting in Spain.

### Readers should examine

But the NSA's own documents about what these slides mean flatly contradict the claims of the Lt. Gen. Grandhagen. Indeed, these documents could not be clearer that these slides show the number of calls collected by the NSA inside the named country. Readers should examine the NSA's own statements in their documents - when they thought they were writing in secret - and decide for themselves the actual meaning of these slides.

• [You can read them here](#)

**One of the NSA documents we published on Tuesday, entitled «Boundless Informant: Frequently Asked Questions», could not be clearer about what these slides show.**

It reads:

***«The tool is able to create a near real-time snapshot of GAO's collection capability at any given moment. The tool allows users to select a country on a map and view the metadata volume and select details about the collection against that country.»***

According to the NSA, each Boundless Informant slide provides a «near real-time snapshot» about «the collection against that country» — not «from» that country's government, but «against that country».

### Against that country

Over and over, the NSA makes clear that the each slide shows the amount of communication data



**EDWARD SNOWDEN:** A video frame grab provided by LifeNews via Russia 24 TV channel, from Moscow, where Snowden (30) is currently in asylum. The former National Security Agency systems analyst looks over his shoulder during a boat trip on the Moscow River in Moscow, with the Christ the Savior Cathedral in the background.

Photo: LifeNews/AP



**WRITING IN DAGBLADET:** Journalist Glenn Greenwald. Photo: Arne Halvorsen/Dagbladet

collected within the named country (in this case, Norway). The same document thus states that the key questions answered by Boundless Informant slides are «How many records (and what type) are collected against a particular country?» and «What assets collect against a specific country?»

It then adds:

«Clicking on a country will show the collection posture (record counts, type of collection, and contributing SIGADS or sites) against that particular country».

**Even Lt. Gen. Grandhagen Tuesday admitted that what we reported about these Boundless Informant slides is exactly what these NSA documents say they are.**

«I have also read that document and I can see that it says that the intel is directed towards specific countries», he said. «So I can understand that you have read the document the way you did.»

**He nonetheless insisted that the slides show something different than what the NSA's documents describe.**

Consider what Lt. Gen. Grandhagen is claiming: the NSA has spent a massive amount of money to create this highly sophisticated Boundless Informant data collection and counting system. But, Lt. Gen. Grandhagen (and the NSA) now suggest, the NSA described its own counting program in its own secret documents in a radically inaccurate way. Is that remotely believable?

## How does he know?

Moreover, how would the Norwegian intelligence chief know what the NSA's own documents are meant to describe except by what the NSA told him? To understand what these documents actually reveal, aren't the NSA's own secret internal explanations of what their own documents reveal far more reliable than the after-the-fact claims of two governments seeking to attack reporting that they dislike?

But it is not only that one NSA document we published that contradict Lt. Gen. Grandhagen's claims about these slides. Other NSA documents



**COLLECTION - AFGHANISTAN:** - NSA collects on average of 1,2-1,5 million calls per day in connection to Afghanistan. A small subset of the total collected by the NSA for Spain (4 million/day) and Norway (1.2 million), shown in the graph below. Clearly, the NSA counts the communications it collects from Afghanistan in the slide labeled «Afghanistan» — not the slides labeled «Spain» or «Norway», writes Greenwald. Graph: NSA



**- IMPOSSIBLE:** - It is impossible that the slide labeled «Spain» and the slide labeled «Norway» only show communications collected from Afghanistan because the total collected from Afghanistan is so much less than the total collected from Spain and Norway (shown above). Graph: NSA

**BESKRIVER BOUNDLESS INFORMANT:** : Dette dokumentet beskriver NSA-programmet Boundless Informant.

## (U//FOUO) Key Questions

1. How many records are collected for an organizational unit (e.g. FORNSAT) or country?
2. Are there any visible trends?
3. What assets collect against a specific country? What type of collection?
4. What is the field of view for a specific site? What type of collection?

**PURPOSE OF SIGINT:** «What assets collect against a specific country?» has been the core purpose of Boundless Informant as described by the NSA itself, according to NSA-documents, writes Greenwald.



about this Boundless Informant program make this equally clear. One of them, entitled «Boundless Informant: Describing Mission Capabilities from Metadata Records», states that the «Key Questions» for Boundless Informant records includes «What assets collect against a specific country?».

**From the start, this — accurately counting collection against specific countries - has been the core purpose of Boundless Informant as described by the NSA itself.**

Over and over, the NSA emphasizes that the key to these Boundless Informant slides is that they enable counting to be done of the metadata records «collected against a specific country», and it is devoted to asking «What type of coverage do we have on country X?».

**That's why each slide bears the name of a specific country: because it reflects how many communications events have been collected against those inside the country.**

## Contradicted

Beyond the NSA's clear documents, the claim of the NSA with regard to our reporting in Spain, and the one made yesterday by the Lt. Gen. Grandhagen - that this collection only shows communications from Afghanistan - is squarely contradicted by other documents. Indeed, there is a Boundless Informant slide labeled «Afghanistan» that specifically counts the amount of metadata collected from that country.

**What it shows is that the NSA collects on average of 1.2-1.5 million calls per day from that country: a small subset of the total collected by the NSA for Spain (4 million/day) and Norway (1.2 million):**

Clearly, the NSA counts the communications it collects from Afghanistan in the slide labeled «Afghanistan» — not the slides labeled «Spain» or «Norway». Moreover, it is impossible that the slide labeled «Spain» and the slide labeled «Norway» only show communications collected from Afghanistan because the total collected from Afghanistan is so much less than the total collected from Spain and Norway.

Critically, note what Lt. Gen. Grandhagen is actually denying, and what he is not denying. He does not deny that the NSA collects the metadata of telephone calls and other communications of Norwegians inside Norway. Indeed, when asked that, he specifically said - despite the very close relationship between the NSA and his agency — that he does not know if the NSA does so:

**«I cannot say that the Americans are not doing surveillance in Norway. I do not have the full overview of everything that they are doing.»**

Nor does he dispute the authenticity of the documents we published. Indeed, he admits that his agency is collecting the metadata for at least 33 million calls every month, a fact that seems to have come as a great surprise to the Norwegian people. That leads to all sorts of important questions, including: does Norway really face a security threat from millions of people, or is the Norwegian agency collecting invasive metadata information on the communications activities of millions of people?

## Germany and Brazil

Finally, there has been substantial other reporting about these slides in multiple newspapers around the world. Der Spiegel was the first to use them — back in June - to report that the NSA collects 500 million calls and emails in Germany in an [average 30-day period](#).

### (U//FOUO) Typical SIGINT Data Calls/Questions

1. How many sites do we have in the region? How many records are they producing?
2. What type of coverage do we have on country X?
3. What type of collection and volume do we get out of site A? How do these types/volumes compare against site B? Against site C?

**LEAKED DOCUMENTS:** In this interview with the British newspaper The Guardian, just before he went public, Edward Snowden (30) explains his actions. Video: THE GUARDIAN



**DIPLOMATIC ISSUE:** Brazil has previously summoned the US ambassador to Brazil, Thomas Shannon, over allegations that the US National Security Agency spied on President Dilma Rousseff. Above Rousseff is talking to Obama in the oval office. Photo: Brendan SMIALOWSKI/AFP

A similar report appeared in July in the Brazilian daily newspaper O Globo, reporting that the NSA [collected 2.3 billion telephone calls and emails](#) from the Brazilian telecommunications system in a 30-day period; last week, that report that was awarded Brazil's [top journalism award](#).

**The NSA never denied that Brazilian report. They could not possibly have done so, as Brazil does not collect and then turn over mass, indiscriminate metadata to the NSA, either in Afghanistan or elsewhere. The report was accurate because it used the Boundless Informant materials labeled «Brazil» to show the quantity of communications collected by the NSA against that country.**

## Counting calls

It is, of course, possible that the NSA built an expensive, sophisticated system of data collection and counting, and then described their own system with wild inaccuracy. The only way to believe the claims of the NSA and Lt. Gen. Grandhagen is to assume that this is what happened.

**But that, rather obviously, seems quite unlikely. The relevant NSA documents state over and over that the purpose of these Boundless Informant slides is to count how many calls were collected against the named country.**



**NIS:** Lt. Gen. Grandhagen, Chief of Norwegian Intelligence Services (NIS), at the press conference Tuesday. He says to Dagbladet that he disagrees with Greenwald's claims in this article. - We are a hundred per cent sure that our explanation is correct, says Grandhagen. Foto: Jacques Hvistendahl / Dagbladet

